

# THE IMPERFECTION Of most Governments,

Taken out of the EPITOMY of the

## ROMAN HISTORY:

Written by *Lucius Annæus Florus.*

Where it plainly appears that the Liberty of the most Flourishing Common-wealth of the *Romans* destroyed all Property, and its own Government turned to Leveling, Discord and Confusion, till it brought in the Government it most hated.

With a Reason or two added why, all Great and Free Commonwealths will be subject to the same.

Written by *Roger Trusty.*

To all my Country Men whose only Love of their Nation, inclines them to a Commonwealth; I would but shew all Powers equally frail.

GENTLEMEN,

20. Aug. 1680/

[Had no Design to cry down Liberty, nor disparage Common-wealths. I love no coercive power in Church or State, more than is necessary for preservation of the publick peace, but I presume you would not incline your Nation in Blood and Rapine on a mistake; specially when the Major part of our own three Kingdoms are like to differ from you, and as hundred thousand French in Arms, are neglecting their other advantages on Christenome, to incorporate themselves in your Common wealth, by your own Fire-sides with your Wives and Daughters when you Rebel. I suppose those Jealousies will be more insupportable to you than your present ones, when you have Read here what you may find in Florus; not, I must conclude you are more inclined to bring in Popery than I could wish you, for our supposed unerring Government.

I would have many Readers, and therefore have contracted a Subject fit for a Volume to a two-penny Pamphlet, which can be but half an hours trouble to any man, if my endeavours do you and my Contry a kindness, I have the only End aimed at, by

Your humble Servant,

*Roger Trusty.*

It is unknown to no Body that reads History, that the *Romans* had seven Kings in their Infancy, most of them Elected, and six of them good Princes, who did cultivate them with Religion, Virtue, Arts and Arms according to their Mode: but the seventh was a Usurper, *Tarquin* the Proud, a Man naturally Wicked, but necessitated by his Usurpation to continue a Tyrant, because all Persons or Powers must maintain such Wrongs by a standing Army, which turns the best Governments that can be to the worst. But his Own and his Wives insupportable Humor, with his Sons barbarous Rape of the fair and vertuous *Lus coelia*, gave the incensed *Romans* a unanimous Courage to revolt from him, and Kingly Government together.

But though their attempts was successful, it was hardly maintained against their Neighbours the *Lains*, and especially against *Perfenna* King of the *Hetourians*, who Armed for *Tarquin*, (though they could find nothing Lovely in him,) because they did not like such a president for deposing of Kings.

ly in him,) because they did not like such a president for deposing or Killing.

But the *Romans* I find (in the ninth Chapter and first Book of *Florus*) did submit to the Model and Persons of *Brutus* and *Collatine* the Husband of *Lucretia* whom they first obeyed as Consuls or Annual Kings: but the People removed *Collatine* (because aliened to *Tarquin*) and chose *Valerius Publicola* in his place, in whose Consulship it was ordained, that there should be Appeals from the Sentences of the Consuls to the People, which made the Government an absolute Common wealth; and this seemed alaffing Foundation of Liberty, and their continual Wars with their Neighbours kept them at Unity longer than so great a Common-wealth could otherwise have been; for the *Grecian* and *Italian* Common-wealths subsisted by their smallness. *Venice* is an Aristocracy, or Tyranny of the Nobility, and the States of *Holland* are so little accountable to their People, and so great Taxers even of Travellers on their necessary occasions, that they may be called so too. But to come to the first Buds of disorders, in the only considerable Common-wealth that ever was, except the Carthaginian. *Florus* his first Book and two and twentieth Chapter begins with their Armies, who prelusuring on Liberty, stoned their General *Posthumus*, for disappointing them of a Booty he had promised, and another time when they might have vanquished the Enemy under their General *Apus Claudius* they refused to Fight.

It is to be observed, that one *Valerius* having animated the People against their Consul, they

under their General *Apus Claudius* they refused to Fight. And in the same Chapter is mentioned, that one *Valerion* having animated the People against their Consul, they all refused to be involved for Soldiers, and broke the Rods carried before the Consul, as well as his Commands, this Chapter farther says, that they grew so hardy as to fend into Banishment the most excellent of the nobility whom they believed opposite to their unbridled desires, and *Coriolanus* would have obliged them to till the Earth, for which they banished him: but he was able to besiege *Rome* for this, and had Ruin'd their Government, had not Intercession prevailed.

*Comillius* was also banished by them, because they pretended that he had not made an equal partition of the spoils of the *Veens*. Conquered by him between the Army and People.

Though this gallant and honest man, Armed afterward at their intercession against the Gauls, posset at Rome, and sav'd them from Ruine by beating them out, and then without Revenge lived and died peaceably amongst them. And this pregnant Chapter tells us of two vehement Contentts between the Senate and People which Past the Bounds of Reason and Equity, for the Sedition was so great, that the People abandoned their Houses and threatened to make a Defert of the Town, and bury it in its Ruines.

The three and twentieth Chapter, first Book, mentions a Civil discord, but on a more Just occasion against Ufurers, which was appeased by an Oration.

The four and twentieth Chapter and first Book, tells us of an other Sedition, caused by the Usurpation of the Decemviri, chief Citizens, Commanded by the people to contract the *Greek* Laws into twelve Tables, but these Favorites of the people were so insolent, when they had executed their Commission, to continue their Authority, and so far to Tyrannise: that *Appius* one of their number attempted to Ravish a noble Maid, procur'd an unjust Sentence to pals against her, and caused her to be draged as a Slave, till her Father *Virginus* tore her from them, killed her in the Street, and than found a party strong enough, to subdue and imprison that insolent Magistrate.

The twentieth fifth Chapter, first Book, mentions a Sedition of the people, about Marriage into the Families of Senators, and *Cammilus* tribune of the people was the Author of that Tumult.

The twenty sixth Chapter, first Book mentions another Commotion about admittance to Dignities equally with the Nobles, which they extorted from the Senate.

They caused *Spurius Cassius* to be Murdered on a bare supposition of affecting *Royalty*. They also destroyed *Metius* on the same distrust merely for being liberal to themselves.

They also destroyed *Merino* on the same distrust merely for being liberal to themselves. And for *Manlius* who had defended the Capital for them against the *Gauls*: they for a punishment of his Pride precipitated from the top of the Rock: which he had preserved, as the last stake of his ingrateful People, and these were the Diseases of this infant Commonwealth, all in the first Book of *Florus* whilst *Italy* was scarce yet subdued.

But all this while the *Comunes* (being Warlike, well Arm'd and disciplined,) prospered in their VVars though slowly, for they were five hundred years in subduing *Italy*. Common Warlike, those effeminate *Africans* were worst

But their next quarrel being with the great *Carthaginian* Common-Wealth, those effeminate *Africans* were worst ed by Sea and Land, and justled out of *Sicily*, *Sardinia*, and almost all *Spain*, till the great *Hannibal* General com- ed by the *Carthaginians*, entertain great Bodys of *Gauls* and *Spanish* Horse, beat them in four fey Battails, and had ruin'd them, if his factious Common-wealth had not retarded his supplys, to pursue his Victory whilst the *Romans* were dejected, but they recovered and beat his supplys, and then invading *Affrick*, *Hannibal* was forced to snip his Foot and leave his Victorious Horse, and was beaten in *Affrick*, and *Carthage* subdued.

So that *Africa* fell into their Hands, as easily as the Effeminate *Asiatics* afterwards did, so that the Conquest of those two parts of the World in two hundred years, (with some pieces in *Europe* was not so strange as *Florus* would have it) for *Alexander* the great, did almost the same in ten years.

But I pretend not to VVrite their Hiftory, but only for a Hint that there great VVars kept the mor

For to return to my Undertaking, the thirteenth Chapter of the third Book of *Florus*, tells us plainly, that the Power of the Tribunes of the People, was the source and cause of the Seditions of the Multitude.

For they being well designed as Orators and Advocates for their Preservation, sought to increase their Authority and Favour, by proposing plausible Laws in their behalf,

1. As for the dividing of Lands and Inheritances for their Use.

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2. The giving away Corn to the poorer Citizens.
3. And the reducing of Causes Publick and Private to their Judicature.

But of all these, the last is the most reasonable, and the most equitable, and the most necessary. For what could seem more equitable, then that the People, should recover their

3. And the reducing of Causes Publick and Private to their judicature.  
All these had shews of Justice, for what could seem more equitable, then that the People, should recover their Original Rights from the incroachment of the Senators.

And that they enjoying the Government of Provinces, the Knights might sustain their Dignities, by the Profit

**Profits of Causes and Judgments yet these things (says my Author) tended to the Ruin of the Common-Wealth; for it seems that the transferring the Judicature, soon brought the Publick Tribute or Revenue to nothing, and the charging the Corn of the Poor on the publick Treasure, and waisted that also, and (as *Florus* sayeth) weakened the very Nerves of the Common-Wealth, and how (says he) could one give back to the People, their ancient Lands, without Ruining those who possesst them, and who were a part of the People also, and enjoyed those Lands as the Inheritances of their Ancestors, by proscripti<sup>o</sup>n of time.**

And now the fourteenth Chapter of the third Book, tells us of *Tiberius Braccus* an eloquent and graceful Tribune of the People, who mounted the Tribunal, and proposed a Law to pass by Votes of the People, for taking away Lands from the owners, (and by three Comissioners than appointed) to give them to such Levellers as most wanted them, the Nobility, the owners, and some of his Fellow Tribunes opposed him.

But he caus'd *Ennius Octavius* his Fellow Tribune, to be thrown off the Tribunal, threatned him with Death and made him quit his Office, but though he prevailed then.

He Mounted another day, and then the Nobility and Owners fell to Blows with him, made him fly to the Capital, where touching his Head to move the People to defend him, one *Scipio Nasica* animated the people against him, with pretence that he wanted a Diadem, upon which supposition his expected Protectors turned his immediate destroyers, for they gave him no Audience before they killed him.

In the next Chapter his Brother *Caius Gracchus* pursued the same hopes, with larger promises to the People.

But one of the Tribunes opposed him, and they first killed his Friends, and the Consul *Opimus* Massacred him.

The sixteenth Chapter third Book, tells us, that notwithstanding this *Apriellus Saturninus* supported by the General *Marius*, always an Enemy of the Nobility renewed the quarrel of the *Gracchi*, *Marius* caused *Annus* the Competitor of *Saturninus* to be publickly Murdered, they forcibly substituted a new Tribune another *Gracchus*, a mean Man: but *Saturninus* forced the Senate to pass the Laws of the *Gracchi*, threatening to deprive the Opposers the use of Fire and Water.

This *Salustianus* continued his Usurpation three years, as chosen Consul, caused his Colloque *Caius Memmius* to be Murdered, to substitute one *Glaucias* an instrument of his Civility in his Room, but the Senate at last was so Iritated at his Outrages and *Marius* foraking him, and Bandyng against him their Forces, made him flye to the Capitol, but beleaguering him there, and cutting off his Water, he Capitulated, Submitted, and seemed Penitent, and was admitted into the Senate Houfe, where the people (whose Laws he had asserted) broke in forcibly upon him, and after an assault with Cudgels, and other Instruments of Indignation, they Tore and Cut him to pieces.

But at last the Laws of the *Gracchi* were established, by new Violencies, the power of the Senate abated, and that of the Knights so exalted, that they had the Lives and Fortunes of the Senate, People, and Nobility at their dispose: seized the publick Revenues, and all *Italy* fell into Rebellion, which the *Romans* at last with much Blood and hazard quenched, as appears in the 17th and 18th Chapters of the third Book, and it also appears, that these Divisions between Senate and Tribunes gave Courage to the very Slaves to Rebel against their Masters, in the following Chapter.

And this was the natural Corruption and Club-Law of this Free-Common-wealth, mixt Government, where my Lords, the People could never agree with their own Trustees, longer than their Common Enemies obliged them, but these were the beginnings of their Miseries, the People had Liberty, and a free Common-wealth was designed to preserve property, but I fear that in any great Kingdome or Empire it does necessarily destroy it.

For now in the 21 Chapter of the third Book of *Florus Marinus* a Popular General of high Reputation, afflicted by *Sulpicius* the Tribune of the People procured his own Election by them, to go fight *Mitridates*, though *Sylla* had the Commiſſion, and was ſucceſſfully employed before him by the general Votes of the Senate.

But *Sylla* not able to indure this injury, returns with his Army and enters *Rome* with Fire and Sword, Slaughters and proffribes *Marinus* his Party and he hardly escaped in the Disguise of a Slave.

But *Cinna* and *Octavius* being Consuls, they divided, one being for *Marinus* and his Party, and the other for *Sylla* and the Senate, but though both were Arm'd, *Cinna* was chased away to the banished.

But *Marinus* returning out of *Africk*, his Party flock'd to him breaks open Prisons, and making up an Army, Marches to *Ofiss* and sacks it, his Army then enters *Rome*, and spilt more Blood (says my Author) of the Senators and chief of the Citizens, than was shed at the Sack of *Carthage*.

But *Sylla* returns again by long Marches from *Asia*, was again Victorious. Young *Marin* and his dispairing Party in *Rome* commit new slaughters, not sparing the Temples.

*Sylla* returns and perseveres in Cruel Slaughters, when the War was ended, they were numberless whose Throats were Cut in the Town, till *Furfidius* told *Sylla*, that he must leave some alive to be Commanded.

*Sylla* then made a Roll of two thousand of the flower of Senators and Knights, which with several forts of torturing Deaths finished the Cruelty at *Rome*, but not in other miserable Cities of *Italy*.

The next ill effect of this Dissension, was *Catalines* Conspiracy, to have burnt *Rome*, who was hardly destroy-

Notwithstanding the *Romans* Victory over the Ufurping *Cataline*, which seemed to have settled their Common-

wealth by the good Conduct of *Cicero*, the wife and Eloquent Consul, *Caio* and other bold Senators, yet the World was grown so weary of their weak and factious Government, with the bloody mischiefs it produc'd, that there was a continued succession of Usurpers on it.

For the second Chapter of the fourth Book of *Florus*, tells us, That *Pompey*, *Cæsar* and *Crassus*, uniting themselves together did so over-awe the *jealous* Senate and People of *Rome*, that without any Bloodshed, they Governed as three Princes, for ten years together, but *Crassus* being slain in the *Parthian* War, and *Julia* the Daughter of *Cæsar*, and Wife of *Pompey*, dying also, the Link of the *Triumvirat* was broken and *Cæsar* and *Pompey*, who both aimed at Sovereign Power, were now to dispute for the great Stake of the World together, *Cæsar* had fewer Nations, and less numerous Forces to follow him, but having made only the difficult Conquest of *Gaul* and *Ger-*

aimed at Sovereign Power, were now to dispute for the great Stake of the World together, *Cesar* had fewer Nations, and less numerous Forces to follow him, but having made only the difficult Conquest of *Gaul* and *Ger-*

many for the *Romans*; he knew those Nations united to his invincible Courage, Conduct and Fortune might give a bold Defiance, to all the rest of the World, his success answered his expectation, for he beat *Pompey's* Lieutenant in *Spain* and subdu'd it, drove him and the Senate together out of *Italy*; and at *Pharsalia* made the Victorious *Pompey* fly his Fury, and by his personal Valour got more difficult Victories of his Warlike Enemy in *Africa* and *Spain*, and returned Triumphant to *Rome*.

But *Brutus* and *Cassius* ambitious to restore their Common-wealth, cut down *Caesar*, the greatest and gallantest Usurper that ever lived in the Senate, and *Pompey* being Dead before him, one would have thought that the Common-wealth of *Rome* must have been restored.

But the dead *Caesar* had more Friends than the living Senate. The People of *Rome* were grown so weary of the Miseries of their own exorbitant Power, that *Brutus* and *Cassius* were forced to fly from *Rome*, to other Nations, to raise an Army to recover their last Common-wealth.

But the Major part of the *Romans* fought against them and their Old Government, and beat them under their Conduct of *Augustus Caesar* and *Anthony*, and so ended this prodigious Common-wealth.

*Augustus Anthony*, and *Lepidus*, afterwards set up a most Bloody Triumvirat, destroying by Proscripti- on all the adverse Faction, and all that had Power or Wealth to hurt them; and *Augustus* was the Cruellest of the three, whilst he could lay the Faults upon his Colleagues; but when he prevailed upon them both, and became sole Emperour; He prov'd a Wise, Just and Merciful Prince; which is a Note to me that the Absolute Government of many Interests or Rulers in an Aristocracy, is a greater Ty- ranny and Oppression than single Persons commonly are.

But some wicked Emperours succeeded, and at last the Armies Usurped upon them, sold and murdered them at Pleasure till their Variety of Elections brought the Empire to decay; but the great *Constantine* Victorious over them all (though he advanced Christianity) quite Ruined the Empire, by dividing it into Ea- stern and Western.

By all which it appears, That Elective Empires, Usurping Powers, and Faction Common-wealths, will be Governed and ruined by their or Foreign Armies: which makes the World affect Hereditary Crowns.

And now I shall add some brief Comments of my own, on this Historical Pamphlet, or Epitomy of the Roman Government. When they threw off Kings, they made the most careful Provision against Oppression and Cruelty; that a most Ingenious People could do; for they chose two Consuls, lest one should Usurp or Tyrannize; and lest time should give them too much power to Combine together; they made a yearly Relation or Change of those two chief Magistrates and yet farther, to serve all on that side, they made Appeals from their Sentences to the People as the supreme Power.

But they could not make such an Annual Rotation or Alteration in the whole Body of the Senate or Council of State, for if that Power be not fixed in known wise Persons improved by Practice and Experi- ence, no Treaties of War and Peace could go on, no private Leagues of weaker Nations against a strong- er; or Intelligence from Foreign Counsels could be had; for it cannot be thought where Mens Lives and Fortunes depends upon Secrecy; that they will trust new Ministers of State every year; who come in igno- rant of the past Correspondances and Transactions, nor can the Executive power of a Nation, betray Se- crets by giving a publick Account to the Legislative power; and if the Romans had not Lodg'd the Su- pream Power, and last Appeals to themselves, they had set up an Aristocracy, or Confederacy of many interested Families, with their Kindred, Friends and Relation to them. But they did not consider that the poorest sort of the people is the greatest number, and that they must necessarily turn Levellers for two weighty Reasons.

The first is because they want what other Men have: And the other, because none can Usurp their Government but Rich men.

And therefore all Industrious men, that have gotten Estates must be taken down, to the de- struction of all Traffick and Industry, for who will Labour for others to take their gains from them.

This having been the practise of the *Roman* Common-wealth, and the reasons seeming apparent, that all great Nations replenishment with poor People will doe the same by themselves or Trustees, I must Con- clude as I began, with deploring the Insufficiency with most or all Governments, and wishing we may all agree to strengthen our old Fabrick, since we may be knocked on the Head, in the pulling it down, but shall never agree on a new Building though Our potent Enemies should let us alone.

And this was too evident in Our own Government in 1641. where the Lords and Commons de- posed the King, the peoples Trustees the Commons deposed the Lords House, and then deposed of men- Lives and Fortunes by their Votes, as a perpetual standing Aristocratical Tyranny despising the Last so, a Triennial Succession of Parliaments as much as the other Laws of the Land, till after many years sitting they were first Weeded and then Rooted out by their own Army; by which it appears, that the Peoples Trustees can destroy Liberty and Poverty, as well as the People themselves, the more to confirm the Imperfection of all Governments, when once the Rule of the Law is broken.

This Popular Army Governed as the *Romans* Army did, and used the Name of a Common-wealth sometimes, but were settled in nothing but their own Divisions, till the Major part of them, and the peo- ple agreed to return to the ancient Law and Government of the Nation.

F I N I S.